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DE RUEHEG #1380 1301425  
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5121  
INFO RUCNSOM/SOMALIA COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 001380

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2017  
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SUBJECT: SOMALIA: EU ENVOY VISITS CAIRO, HEARS ARAB VIEWS  
ON SOMALIA

Classified by Minister Counselor for Economic and Political  
Affairs, William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) New European envoy for Somalia, Jean-Christophe Belliard, was in Cairo May 8-9 for meetings with senior officials at the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and Arab League to discuss ways forward on the political track in Mogadishu. UK poloff Martin Hetherington told emboff on May 9 that Belliard briefed EU diplomats at the conclusion of his visit, telling them that both the GOE and Arab League had negative views toward the Transitional Federal Government's (TFG) ability to end the conflict and achieve national reconciliation. Belliard reportedly was told by the Egyptians and AL Assistant Secretary General Ben-Helli that meaningful reconciliation among Somalis required dialogue with influential former Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) figures, including Sheikh Aweys and others in exile in Asmara and the region. Arab League member states are expected to meet in Jedda, he reportedly heard, before a June 16 reconciliation conference planned by the TFG in Mogadishu.

¶2. (C) Poloff checked these points with Arab League Secretariat Advisor Zeid Al Sabban on May 9. Sabban said the

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League was obliged by a March 2007 Summit resolution to meet and discuss Somalia at the ministerial level in Jedda, Saudi Arabia "in the near future." No date has been set for the meeting, he said, and it remains undecided whether senior officials will meet first in Cairo. The League, he said, "would not take any steps without consulting closely with the TFG -- including on invite lists." Should a meeting occur in Jedda, he continued, organizations such as the United Nations, the African Union, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development may be invited. As for Sheikh Aweys and other former UIC figures, he said the League's position is consistent with UNSC resolutions: those who threaten the political process with violence "are not welcome." Sabban said that Belliard considered Aweys to be a "peace leader."

¶3. (C) Comment: Given the third-person readout of Belliard's meetings, it would be best to compare notes either directly with him or with other European colleagues tracking Somalia issues. Certainly, the next meeting of the International Contact Group on Somalia in London will offer an opportunity to engage directly with Belliard, the League, and possibly the Egyptians on their respective views and plans.  
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